

**Page Denied**

STAT

MAY 1976

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/06/13 : CIA-RDP80R01731R001900070019-9

# Let's Stop Undermining the CIA

If the United States is to continue as a flag-bearer against totalitarianism, says this former Secretary of Defense, it must protect and preserve our international intelligence network

BY MELVIN R. LAIRD

**W**HE AMERICANS are on the verge of doing ourselves what our worst enemies have been unable to do: destroy our intelligence services.

Last year, Senate and House committees began searching investigations of the Central Intelligence Agency. The investigators' intent was honorable, and they have brought to light malpractices that must be curbed. According to Congressional findings and CIA admissions, during the 29 years the CIA has existed—1947 to 1976—agency personnel perpetrated the following questionable acts of domestic espionage: They illegally entered four

homes or offices, tapped the phones of 27 people, placed five U.S. citizens under surveillance and infiltrated ten agents into the anti-war movement. For over two decades, they opened private mail received by Americans from communist countries. Additionally, in examining possible foreign influence on the anti-war movement, the CIA accumulated files on approximately 10,000 American citizens.

The side effects of these investigations, however, have proved much more harmful to the country than the ills that Congress sought to remedy. As CBS commentator Eric Sevareid recently declared: "We've had Congressmen breaking solemn agreements with the Executive by leaking classified information in the name of higher laws of their selection. We have had journalists break-

continued

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/06/13 : CIA-RDP80R01731R001900070019-9

ing their word on information received off the record by leaking it to other journalists, which is morally the same as publishing it themselves. And, worse, we've had zealots publishing the names of American intelligence personnel—which, in this time of terrorists everywhere, increases the risk of kidnapping and murder. To do this is to commit the moral equivalent of treason."

The dubious acts committed by the CIA have been distorted and magnified, while lurid charges flourished, often without a scintilla of substantiation. For example:

**Allegation:** The CIA jeopardized public health by conducting biological-warfare experiments in New York City subways. **Fact:** The Army, to assess vulnerability of the transit system to sabotage, placed some innocuous powder in a subway, then measured how far it was wafted down the tunnel. The test menaced nobody. The CIA had no part in it.

**Allegation:** The CIA placed secret informants on the White House staff to spy on the Presidency. Its chief White House "contact man" for a while was Alexander P. Butterfield, later director of the Federal Aviation Administration. **Fact:** Butterfield never had any connection with the CIA. For the past 20 years, like other agencies, the CIA, at White House request, has routinely assigned specialists to the Presidential staff.

**Allegation:** The CIA has assassinated foreign leaders and perhaps even some Americans. **Fact:** More

than a decade ago, when a *de facto* state of war existed between the United States and Cuba, the CIA involved itself in unsuccessful plots to kill Fidel Castro. It also considered poisoning Patrice Lumumba of the Republic of the Congo. But the prosaic truth, as established by the skeptical Senate investigators, is that the CIA never assassinated anyone anywhere.

**Hemorrhage of Secrets.** As the CIA's legitimate secret operations are exposed and its sensitive intelligence-gathering methods irresponsibly illuminated, our first line of defense against attack—and our only defense against covert attack—is becoming increasingly paralyzed. In foreign parliaments and press, the feasibility of confidential collaboration with America has been publicly questioned. Some countries have stopped confiding in us almost entirely for fear their confidences will be broken by Congress or the press. Individual foreigners who have risked their lives to secretly serve the United States—including agents well placed in the Soviet bloc and the Third World—have quit out of fear of identification. The difficulty of enlisting reliable new foreign sources has increased greatly.

Meanwhile, scores of gifted American men and women in the CIA possessing priceless expertise and experience have been disgusted at the pillory with which their patriotism has been rewarded, and many have even left. Important intelligence undertakings, approved

by Congressional committees and the President as essential to the national interest, have collapsed in the glare of publicity. For instance, disclosures that the United States has used submarines in Soviet territorial waters to monitor Russian weapons tests have greatly diminished the flow of this vital intelligence.

The hemorrhage of secrets is also destroying the CIA's capacity to act covertly in Western interests. Sometimes the discreet provision of money, information, advice and other requested help affords the only practical means of countering subversion abroad. Repeatedly, the Soviet Union has sought to subvert other nations by buying control of politicians, bureaucrats, journalists and trade-union leaders, by surreptitiously supplying vast sums to build the local communist party into the dominant political force. Plans to combat such subversion lose all effectiveness if announced. If identified, recipients of our assistance forfeit credibility and become instant targets of venomous attack by communists and others.

**Record of Success.** In an ideal world, we would need neither intelligence services nor armed forces. But we must have both if we are to survive in the real world of 1976, which has become very unsafe for democracy and the United States. Of the earth's 158 nations, only 39 presently maintain democratic, representative governments and open societies. Many of the totalitarian nations are fanatic in their

continued

hostility to freedom and to America. Our access to many indispensable natural resources depends upon fragile regimes. The complex daily functioning of our society is threatened by the phenomenon of international terrorism. Meanwhile, the Russians—besides their worldwide subversion, fomenting of revolution and support of terrorism—persist in an enormous, costly effort to attain undisputed military supremacy with which they hope to intimidate the West into further retreat.

To cope with all these threats and uncertainties, we must keep ourselves continuously and accurately informed as to what is happening, especially in those areas shrouded in totalitarian secrecy. To repel covert aggression, we must resort at times to covert methods. President Harry Truman and Congress recognized this when they created the CIA in 1947. And this unchanged reality has been recognized by every subsequent President—and Congress, except the present one.

Having served first on one of the Congressional committees that oversee our intelligence apparatus, and later as Secretary of Defense, I am familiar with some of the accomplishments of our intelligence services. Consider:

*During the past 25 years, the Soviet Union has not developed a single major new weapon without our knowing it well in advance. Without such knowledge, we undoubtedly would have wasted untold billions preparing to counter*

threats which did not actually exist. Current efforts to negotiate curtailment of the nuclear-arms race are possible only because our precise intelligence enables us to count every Soviet missile, submarine and bomber, and to monitor Soviet compliance with the treaties achieved. If we destroy the effectiveness of the CIA, we will destroy with it whatever hope there is of negotiating any significant disarmament.

*Timely intelligence has helped avert war.* During the 1973 Arab-Israeli conflicts, U.S. intelligence—live agents and technical surveillance—detected Soviet preparations to dispatch troops to the Middle East. Thus alerted, we were able to initiate urgent diplomatic and other actions that persuaded the Russians to forgo military intervention.

A few years ago, our agents—or spies, if you will—ascertained that one non-communist country was about to attack another. Details cannot yet be made public. But we quickly and privately brought the countries together, laid out the facts, induced them to negotiate. CIA espionage thus *prevented* a war.

Since late 1973, U.S. intelligence has given both Israel and Egypt considerable sense of security by continuously showing each what the other is doing militarily. Given proof that neither is about to pounce on the other, the Arabs and Israelis have been willing at least to try to devise a formula for Middle East harmony. Our intelligence has bought the necessary time.

*Through infiltration of various terrorist movements, the CIA has aborted numerous plots.* On at least two occasions, the CIA has forestalled assassins bound for the United States with orders to kill elected public officials. It has also thwarted plans to kill prominent American Jews with letter bombs.

While Israel's premier Golda Meir was visiting New York City on March 4, 1973, police rushed to busy midtown intersections and hauled away two cars with enough Soviet-made explosives to kill everybody within a 100-yard radius. The terrorist explosives were timed to detonate at noon, when streets would be most crowded. The disaster was prevented because we had advance warning of it.

Shortly before Christmas, 1973, the CIA learned that six small, hand-carried Soviet SA-7 missiles—extremely accurate against low-flying aircraft—were being smuggled in Libyan diplomatic pouches to Black September terrorists in Europe. The terrorists planned to shoot down a 747 landing in Rome. However, acting on CIA intelligence, European governments disrupted the operation and spared the lives of hundreds of holiday travelers.

*The CIA has frustrated communist subversion of other nations.* After World War II, the Soviet Union sponsored a massive clandestine effort to impose communist dictatorships on a weakened Western Europe. Communist operatives, dispensing millions of dollars, organ-

continued

ized strikes to block Marshall Plan aid and engender chaos. They infiltrated the press, tried to buy elections. By providing intelligence, money and counsel, the CIA gave anti-totalitarian factions a fighting chance to resist. Given this chance, the Europeans proceeded to build healthy democracies, indispensable to our own welfare.

During the 1960s, with Soviet backing, Cuba tried to ignite guerilla warfare and violent revolution in Latin America. While quietly urging needed social reforms, the CIA offered Latin Americans the intelligence and training they needed to repel Cuban aggression. The communists were defeated in Bolivia, Venezuela, Brazil, Uruguay, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic. Much the same pattern was repeated in sections of Africa where the Russians sought to establish new colonies for themselves. In the Middle East, too, the CIA has repeatedly aborted Soviet plots to seize control of Arab nations.

In retrospect, it is obvious that not all of the covert actions undertaken by the United States in the past 20 years have been wise or justified. I strongly believe that we never again

should attempt to use military force covertly. Military action can succeed only if understood and endorsed by the public as well as Congress. However, if we abandon our capacity to discreetly help those who wish to resist externally inspired subversion—totalitarianism of either the left or right—we will reduce ourselves to a choice of abandoning them entirely or sending in the Marines.

IN SUM: If we allow our intelligence services to be rendered impotent, we will signal friend and foe alike that we lack both the will and the means to compete with totalitarianism. Unable to protect ourselves, or our friends abroad, America will shrink into isolationism, and our economy, denied essential foreign resources, will shrivel. Then we, and certainly our children, will discover too late that there is no place to hide from totalitarianism.

As a former Secretary of Defense, I believe that we should maintain armed forces stronger than those of any potential enemy. But without an equally strong intelligence service, our nation can never be secure. I know that. So do our friends and antagonists throughout the world.

---

MELVIN R. LAIRD was a U.S. Congressman from Wisconsin for 16 years, before serving as Secretary of Defense from 1969 to 1973. He is now Reader's Digest's senior counsellor for national and international affairs.

STAT

Declassified in Part - Sanitized Copy Approved for Release 2012/06/13 : CIA-RDP80R01731R001900070019-9

**Page Denied**

Next 2 Page(s) In Document Denied